

## Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03  
NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 EB-07  
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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5682  
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AMEMBASSY CANBERRA  
AMEMBASSY JAKARTA  
AMEMBASSY MANILA  
AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE  
AMEMBASSY TOKYO  
AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON  
CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 KUALA LUMPUR 7486

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: PFOR, MY, ASEAN  
SUBJECT: MALAYSIAN VIEWS ON ASEAN

SUMMARY: MALAYSIA'S ASIAN PARTNERS HAVE DESCRIBED, IN  
THE WAKE OF THAI PRIME MINISTEGHANIN'S SWING, THEIR  
PERCEPTIONS OF GOM'S ATTITUDE TOWARD THE REGIONAL ORGAINZATION.  
THIS MESSAGE, REPORTING GOM'S OWN CURRENT VIEWS, BREAKS NO  
NEW GROUND: MALAYSIA SEES ASEAN AS CENTRAL TO ITS FOREIGN  
POLICY STRATEGY; OPPOSES A POLITICO-MILITARY ROLE FOR ASEAN;  
SEES NO PROSPECT OF SRV JOINGING; SEES GOOD PROSPECTS FOR  
ECONOMIC COOPERATION; FAVORS TALKS WITH UNITED STATES ONLY  
ON A SPECIFIC PROJECT BASIS. WE ARE NOT IMPESSED WITH  
THE ASSISTANCE PROJECTS SUGGESTED THUS FAR, QUESTION  
WHETHER OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH ASEAN SHOULD BE ESTABLISHED  
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ON AN AID BASIS, FAVOR WAITING UNTIL ASEAN IS READY TO  
COME TO US WITH SPECIFIC ECONOMIC ISSUES IT WANTS TO DISCUSS.  
END SUMMARY.

1. REPORTS FROM OUR MISSIONS IN THE OTHER ASEAN CAPITALS  
ON THE VISIT OF THE NEW THAI PRIME MINISTER HAVE REVEALED

A RANGE OF PERCEPTIONS AMONG THE FOUR OTHER PARTNERS OF MALAYSIAN ATTITUDES TOWARDS ASEAN, AND I THOUGHT IT APPROPRIATE, THEREFORE, TO SEEK A CURRENT GOM STATEMENT OF ITS POSITION ON THIS REGIONAL ORGANIZATION. THIS MESSAGE SUMMARIZES A CONVERSATION WITH DATUK ZAKARIA BIN HAJI MOHAMED ALI, SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS.

2. THE GOM SEES ASEAN AS A CENTRAL FOCUS OF ITS FOREIGN POLICY STRATEGY. MALAYSIAN SECURITY, SAID ZAKARIA, DEPENDS PRIMARILY ON THE COHESION OF ASEAN COUNTRIES AND THEIR INDIVIDUAL AND COLLECTIVE RESILIENCE TO CREATE AN AREA THAT WILL NOT ATTRACT OUTSIDE INTERVENTION. ASEAN SEEKS TO ACHIEVE THIS COHESION AND RESILIENCE BY COOPERATION PRIMARILY IN THE ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL FIELDS.

3. POLITICAL AND MILITARY COOPERATION EXISTS ON A BILATERAL BASIS BETWEEN ASEAN COUNTRIES, BUT THESE ASPECTS ARE NOT A PART OF ASEAN ITSELF. HE ADMITTED THAT IN INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS THE ASEAN COUNTRIES HAVE TENDED TO CONSULT CLOSELY AND IN SOME CASES COORDINATE ACTION IN THE POLITICAL AREA, BUT MAINTAINED THAT IN THE FUNCTIONING OF ASEAN MALAYSIA SAW NO PROPER PRESENT ROLE FOR THE ORGANIZATION IN THE MILITARY AND POLITICAL FIELDS. ASEAN MILITARY COOPERATION, HE SAID, WOULD REQUIRE THE DEFINITION OF A SPECIFIC EXTERNAL THREAT, AND THE GOM WISHED TO AVOID ANY SUGGESTION THAT ASEAN WAS IN ANY SENSE IN ALLIANCE AGAINST ANY COUNTRY OR GROUP OF COUNTRIES.

4. ZAKARIA SAW NO PROSPECT OF THE SOCIALIST REPUBLIC OF  
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VIETNAM JOINING ASEAN, AND SAID THE GOM THOUGHT THAT ASEAN COUNTRIES SHOULD DEAL WITH THE SRV ON A BILATERAL BASIS. I ASKED IF VIETNAM, WHEN IT WAS READY FOR PARTICIPATION IN A REGIONAL ORGANIZATION, MIGHT NOT -- AS INDONESIA HAD DONE IN 1967 -- INSIST ON THE FORMATION OF A NEW ORGANIZATION WITH ITSELF AS ONE OF THE FOUNDING MEMBERS. ZAKARIA SAID THIS WAS POSSIBLE AND IMPLIED THE GOM WOULD NOT RULE OUT SUCH A FORMULA.

5. I ASKED IF THE OTHER MINISTRIES OF THE MALAYSIAN GOVERNMENT TOOK ASEAN AS SERIOUSLY AS DID THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS. TWO YEARS AGO, A SENIOR OFFICIAL HAD TOLD ME THAT TRADE AND INDUSTRY, AGRICULTURE AND TREASURY WERE RELUCTANT TO SEND SENIOR OFFICIALS EMPOWERED TO MAKE DECISIONS TO ASEAN MEETINGS. I NOTED THAT THE GOM'S MAIN ECONOMIC CONCERNS TRANSCEND ASEAN.

6. ZAKARIA SAID THAT BEFORE THE BALI SUMMIT MEETING,

ASEAN HAD INDEED BEEN PRIMIRAILY A FOREIGN MINISTRY PROJECT. THIS WAS NO LONGER SO, HOWEVER, TO THE DEGREE THAT THE FOREIGN OFFICE WAS HAVING DIFFICULTY MAINTAINING WHAT IT FELT WAS ITS PRIMARY ROLE IN THE FACE OF THE CHALLENGES FROM THE ECONOMIC MINISTRIES. I ASKED WHAT WOULD HAPPEN WHEN ASEAN FERTILIZER WAS \$5 A TON ABOVE THE WORLD CIF PRICE. WOULD THE GOM ASK MALAYSIAN FARMERS TO PAY THE DIFFERENCE? HE SAID WITH A SMILE THAT THAT WOULD BE A SEVERE TEST.

7. WITH REGARD TO ASEAN'S DEALINGS WITH THE U.S., ZAKARIA SAID THAT THE GOM DID NOT FAVOR INSTITUTIONALIZED CONTACTS. HE SAW NO NEED FOR GENERALIZED DISCUSSION IN THE ASEAN CONTEXT OF BROAD ECONOMIC ISSUES. ON THE OTHER HAND, HE COULD SEE THE BENEFIT OF ASEAN-U.S. TALKS ON SPECIFIC PROJECTS AND PROPOSALS SIMILAR TO THOSE BEING CARRIED ON WITH AUSTRALIA, NEW ZEALAND AND CANADA.

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8. COMMENT: THIS STATEMENT OF GOM VIEWS ON ASEAN REFLECTS NO DEPARTURE FROM LONG-HELD MALAYSIAN POSITIONS. WE CONCUR IN ZAKARIA'S JUDGMENT THAT ASEAN STANDS IN THE CENTER OF MALAYSIAN FOREIGN POLICY STRATEGY. THE ORGANIZATION OF THE MINISTRY ITSELF REFLECTS THIS PRIORITY. THREE OFFICERS ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR RELATIONS WITH EUROPE AND AMERICA. FOURTEEN OFFICERS WORK ON SOUTHEAST ASIA AND ASEAN AFFAIRS.

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ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03

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OMB-01 TRSE-00 /063 W

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R 290259Z DEC 76

FM AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5683

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY CANBERRA  
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9. ZAKARIA'S COMMENTS ABOUT ASEAN RELATIONS WITH THE U.S. POINT UP AN AREA OF SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCE IN APPROACH. WE SEE TALKS WITH ASEAN PRIMARILY AS AN OPPORTUNITY TO INFLUENCE ASEAN'S THINKING ON A BROAD RANGE OF MAJOR ECONOMIC ISSUES. ASEAN SEES THESE TALKS AS EITHER FOCUSED NARROWLY ON SOME SPECIFIC AREA IN WHICH THEY WOULD LIKE CONCESSIONS (EG. ASEAN'S REQUEST TO JAPAN TO LIMIT PRODUCTION OF SYNTHETIC RUBBER), OR A PLEDGING SESSION IN WHICH WE OFFER AID IN THE FORM OF SOME SPECIFIC PROJECT. IT SEEMS OBVIOUSLY DESIRABLE TO RESOLVE THIS BASIC DIFFERENCE OF APPROACH BEFORE PROCEEDING FURTHER.

10. WE SHOULD FIRST DECIDE WHETHER WE WISH TO USE ASEAN AS A VEHICLE FOR PROVIDING ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE. FOR REASONS DISCUSSED BELOW, I DON'T THINK WE SHOULD, BUT  
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IF WE DO WE SHOULD HAVE SOMETHING SUBSTANTIAL TO OFFER. I AM NOT IMPORESSED WITH THE SUGGESTIONS ADVANCED THUS FAR. THEY SEEM TO ME PROJECTS THAT ASEAN COULD PURSUE ON ITS OWN IF IT THOUGHT THEM OF SUFFICIENT IMPORTANCE.

11. WE SHOULD EXAMINE CLOSELY OUR MOTIVES FOR OFFERING ASSISTANCE TO ASEAN. REGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS TEND TO MAKE US GO ALL BROODY, AND WE HAVE THUS FAR CONTROLLED OUR URGE TO PICK UP AND CUDDLE THIS ONE. BANGKOK'S 34274 SUGGESTS WE SHOULD HELP ASEAN THROUGH "FORMATIVE PERIOD".

12. I QUESTION THIS RATIONALE. ASEAN HAS BEEN IN BUSINESS FOR TEN YEARS, AND IF IT CANNOT CONTINUE WITHOUT THIS KIND OF UNITED STATES' HELP, IT DOES NOT DESERVE TO SURVIVE. THESE PROJECTS WILL BE ENTIRELY PERIPHERAL TO ASEAN'S "SUCCESS." THEY MAY PRODUCE SOME TRANSITORY GOODWILL FOR US, BUT IN A SHORT TIME IT WILL BE "WHAT HAVE YOU DONE FOR US RECENTLY." DO WE WANT OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH ASEAN TO DEVELOP ON A BASIS OF SMALL FAVORS? I DON'T THINK SO.

13. ASEAN WILL PROSPER AND BE TAKEN SERIOUSLY WHEN IT  
SHOWS IT HAS CLOUT, -- WHEN ITS MEMBERS PERCEIVE THAT  
THEY CAN DEAL MORE EFFECTIVELY WITH US AND OTHER MAJOR  
ECONOMIC POWERS WHEN THEY NEGOTIATE COLLECTIVELY RATHER  
THAN INDIVIDUALLY. THIS PERCEPTION IS DEVELOPING AS  
ASEAN DEALS WITH JAPAN ON SYNTHETIC RUBBER AND THE EEC ON  
TRADE POLICY. OUR TURN FOR TALKS WILL COME, AND WHEN IT  
DOES IT WILL PROBABLY BE ON SUBJECTS THAT WON'T PLEASE US  
MUCH, LIKE TEXTILES AND AVIATION POLICY. IN THE MEANTIME  
I THINK WE SHOULD HOLD TO OUR ORIGINAL CONCEPT AND WAIT  
UNTIL ASEAN REACHES, UNDER ITS OWN STEAM, A LEVEL OF INTERNAL  
ECONOMIC COHESION AND COOPERATION THAT WILL PRODUCE A  
GENUINE ASEAN INITIATIVE FOR TALKS WITH US ON ECONOMIC ISSUES  
THAT MATTER.

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## Message Attributes

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